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Tràigh na Beirigh 9

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Excavation

A small-scale excavation of a coastal erosion section containing archaeological remains, was undertaken at Tràigh na Beirigh 9 (TNB9'13) in September 2013. This site was discovered following an erosion survey around the headland, to trace the full extent of the old ground surface and associated Late Mesolithic shell midden identified at Tràigh na Beirigh 2 (DES 2012; 190).

A 1.10m long section was cleaned to expose the sequence and was stepped back into the headland by c.0.30m. All sediment excavated was bulk sampled for 100% recovery of ecofacts, artefacts and any remaining human bone fragments. The section and deposits were recorded, photographed and geo-referenced using GPS.

The basic stratigraphic sequence comprised of glacial till overlain by an old ground surface, midden material and a thick unit of machair sand. On excavation of these deposits, human remains of a single individual and over 40 struck quartz artefacts were recovered from the old ground surface. The human remains were found overlying a shell-rich midden which had been truncated by a v-shaped cut of a pit. The pit was filled by dark brown sand silt soil and a basal layer of cobbled-sized stones, which had been intentionally placed in order to form a surface. These deposits yielded anthropogenic material such as shell, burnt bone, ash and numerous struck quartz artefacts. The trench section was reinforced with wooden pallets and then reinstated with stones, sand and turf.

Radiocarbon dates will be obtained from remains extracted from environmental samples. This will provide a chronological framework for the site and determine its relationship to others discovered around the headland. A full osteological assessment of the human remains will also be undertaken.

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